

Message Text

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10

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

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RSR-01 /091 W

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R 231559 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9812

INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STOCKHOLM 1037

E. O.11652: N/ A

TAGS: PINT SOCI SW

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT PUTS CHURCH- STATE QUESTION ON ICE

REF: STOCKHOLM 1012

SUMMARY: GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES THAT IT WILL NOT AT PRESENT TIME IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS TO SEPARATE CHURCH FROM STATE. THIS ACTION SHOULD REMOVE A DIVISIVE AND POLITICALLY TROUBLESOME ISSUE FROM ELECTION CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY

1. IN THE MIDST OF THE SECOND PHASE OF ITS PRE- ELECTION POLITICAL OFFENSIVE THE GOVERNMENT HAS CHOSEN TO PUT ON ICE THE POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME CHURCH- STATE QUESTION. A GOVERNMENT COMMISSION ON CHURCH AND STATE RELATIONS WORKING FOR SOME YEARS, MOST RECENTLY UNDER MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO FOR DISARMAMENT AND ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS ALVA MYRDAL, FINALLY IN MAY 1972 PRODUCED A LONG- RANGE PLAN TO SEPARATE CHURCH FROM STATE. THE PROPOSAL, WHICH WOULD HAVE IMPLEMENTED A HISTORIC SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC OBJECTIVE, HAS SINCE MAY BEEN HEAVILY CRITICIZED IN MANY QUARTERS. THE MODERATE AND CENTER PARTIES ARE FIRMLY OPPOSED TO IT. PRIME MINISTER PALME, ACCOMPANIED BY MRS. MYRDAL, ANNOUNCED AT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A MARCH 21 PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT, SEEING THE LACK OF BROAD SUPPORT, HAS DECIDED NOT TO IMPLEMENT THE COMMISSION' S PROPOSALS (BY PRESENTING A BILL TO THE RIKSDAG) AT PRESENT. PALME ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, WILL NOT AGREE TO ORPROPOSE ANY HALF- WAY MEASURES ON THE ISSUE AND WILL RULE OUT ANY BUT THE MOST MARGINAL CHURCH REFORMS UNTIL AND UNLESS THE CLIMATE OF OPINION CHANGES AND THE COMMISSION' S RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE CARRIED OUT. HE SUGGESTED THAT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE LATTER HALF OF THIS DECADE.

2. COMMENT:

THIS ACTION SHOULD EFFECTIVELY REMOVE FROM THE 1973 ELECTION CAMPAIGN AN ISSUE WHICH COULD HAVE CAUSED DEEP SPLITS WITHIN THE SWEDISH SOCIETY. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY REMAINS COMMITTED TO THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH FROM STATE, AS THEY WILL REMIND SUPPORTERS OF THIS POSITION. AT THE SAME TIME THEY WILL SAY THEY HAVE TAKEN THE RESPONSIBLE AND DEMOCRATIC DECISION NOT TO ACT AT PRESENT IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT DIVIDED OPINION ON THE ISSUE.
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*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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